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ABSTRACT

A study described and evaluated the Early Literacy Learning Initiative (ELLI), a collaborative effort between individual schools and school districts and the Ohio State University. The overall goal of ELLI is to significantly raise the level of literacy achievement of kindergarten, first, and second grade students by implementing instructional approaches and safety nets for students needing additional support. Four measures were used to evaluate the program. Five schools met selection criteria: has been an ELLI school at least 4 years; the ELLI training model has been followed and implemented; and the literacy coordinator has been at the school since the beginning of his/her training. Preliminary results reveal that the majority of these schools is demonstrating a consistent pattern of improved standardized test results in reading, through the Fall of 1997. Recommendations include: (1) full implementation of the ELLI training model appears to be necessary to achieve good results; (2) teachers need to be sure that children are engaged in reading and writing instruction for sufficient amounts of time each day; (3) efforts with schools to improve home-school communication should be continued; and (4) literacy coordinators need administrative support to produce the desired change. (Contains 12 references, and 10 figures and 5 tables of data.) (EF)

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The Early Literacy Learning Initiative at The Ohio State University

ED 449 473

the early literacy
ELLI
learning initiative
at The Ohio State University

Research Report
January 1998

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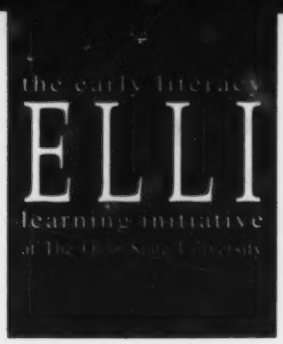

The Early Literacy Learning Initiative Research Report will be published annually by The Early Literacy Learning Initiative at The Ohio State University.

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Introduction

The Early Literacy Learning Initiative (ELLI) is a collaborative effort between individual schools and/or school districts and The Ohio State University (OSU). ELLI provides long-term professional development and systemic support for the educators who are responsible for providing children's first school experiences. The overall goal of ELLI is to significantly raise the level of literacy achievement of kindergarten, first, and second grade students by fully implementing a combination of tested instructional approaches and safety nets for those students who require additional support to achieve independence as readers and writers. The purpose of this report is twofold. First, a thorough description of the Early Literacy Learning Initiative will be provided. Second, preliminary research results will be presented and discussed.

Components of the Early Literacy Learning Initiative

The Early Literacy Learning Initiative incorporates a design for creating systems to guarantee early literacy success for all children. The ELLI project uses principles based on effective district, school, and teacher change. ELLI includes components related to literacy learning and teaching, school-based leadership, professional development, and assessment and research.

Literacy Learning and Teaching Component

Theoretical Base. Theories underlying the Early Literacy Learning Initiative staff development model come from the research of Vygotsky (1978), Bruner (1983), and Clay (1991). All three theorists focus on the role of the "more capable other" in assisting learners to achieve independence. By placing the teacher into the "more capable other" role, the theory can transfer into innovative classroom practice. Teachers systematically observe student learning and then use the knowledge they obtain through observation to inform and/or guide instruction.

Theory also guides curriculum and instruction. It is important that instruction is not too simple or too difficult, yet offers challenges for the learner. Vygotsky refers to this as working in the zone of proximal development; Bruner, as scaffolding; and Clay, as sensitive teaching.

Instructional Framework. Students learn literacy skills during authentic reading and writing experiences. The ELLI instructional framework includes such methodology as reading aloud to children, shared reading, guided reading, independent reading, shared writing, interactive writing, writing workshop, and independent writing. During many daily reading and writing experiences, children are taught about letters, sounds, words and how they work.

Flexible Grouping. Teachers work with both heterogeneous and homogeneous groups of students depending on the teacher's instructional purpose. When it is appropriate, for example during reading aloud or writing workshop, teachers work with the entire class. At other times they meet with small groups or individual students.

Safety Net. A required safety net for all ELLI schools is one-to-one Reading Recovery™ tutoring in grade one for students needing more help.

Home Outreach Program. A parent outreach program may include inexpensive little books that children first read in school and then take home. Many ELLI schools use the KEEP BOOKS™ program as part of their parent outreach.

Materials. The school invests in two kinds of book collections. Teachers need access to carefully selected children's books that can serve as springboards for literacy activities and sources of content knowledge. Classroom collections include a wide variety of literature and informational books. There is also an adequate supply of leveled books housed in a central location for use in guided reading lessons.

School-Based Leadership Component

Commitment. School leaders pledge a five-year commitment to the training and participation of the staff.

Local Leadership. A trained literacy coordinator works with a literacy team. This team is composed of primary classroom teachers, Reading Recovery teachers, Title 1 teachers, reading specialists, special education teachers, and the school principal to develop and implement a local plan to support professional development.

Professional Development Component

Professional Development of Literacy Coordinators. Literacy coordinators in-training participate in a year-long course that includes six weeks of training at OSU or other ELLI certified university training sites: Lesley College, Texas Tech University, and Georgia State University. After their initial year of training, literacy coordinators attend yearly professional development institutes.

The program model provides opportunities for different levels of assistance for participants. The process involves a cycle of university assisted learning, peer interacting, and individual practice and reflection (Button, 1992). Assistance is provided through instruction, coaching, and demonstration incorporating site visitations, videotape analysis and feedback by university trainers.

Staff Development and Support. Teachers participate in a long-term professional development program that integrates theory and practice and is conducted by a specially trained literacy coordinator. Literacy coordinators offer long-term support to the staff through study groups, in-class demonstration lessons and coaching.

Assessment and Research Component

Reflective Practice. Reflection is a key assessment tool utilized by ELLI to strengthen the instructional process. Teachers continually reflect on the effectiveness of their teaching through discussions, videotaping analysis, and systematic observation of students' progress.

Systematic Assessment. Both formal and informal measures are used to monitor student progress. These measures include tasks found in *An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement* (Clay, 1993), running records of text reading, and standardized tests. Teachers use the information gathered to inform their instruction.

Research and Development. The ELLI research design incorporates a five-year data collection process which provides evidence to analyze changes in students' literacy learning. The research design also evaluates school change over time.

The Growth of ELLI

ELLI began in response to a need for a staff development model that offers classroom teachers ongoing support in learning new ways of teaching reading and writing. Work to develop a framework for literacy lessons and a model for staff development began in 1986 as a collaborative effort between staff members at The Ohio State University (OSU) and Reading Recovery, and classroom teachers from the Columbus Public Schools.

In 1989-1990 the OSU staff conducted a year-long pilot study in which kindergarten teachers from Columbus Public Schools were taught how to teach for strategies and skills in their literacy lessons. The kindergarten teachers attended formal classes and were coached by OSU staff. Their instruction was videotaped. With OSU support, the kindergarten teachers reflected upon their teaching. Examination of data from classrooms provided evidence of gains in student

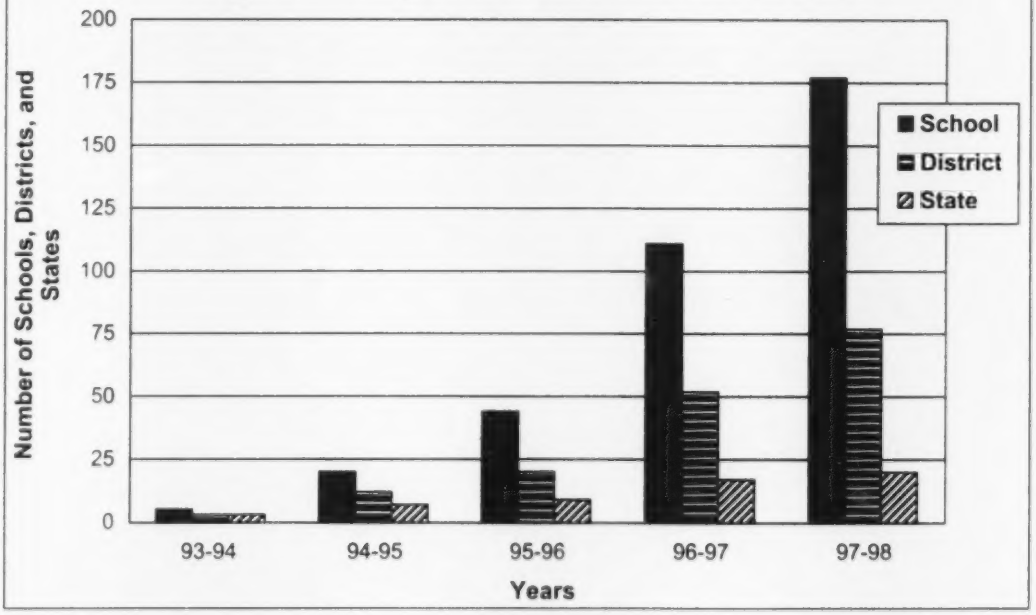
achievement as measured by scores on *Clay's Observation Survey of Literacy Achievement* (1993). OSU staff began to work on a model for broader dissemination of the training. The goal was to develop a model for expanding capacity at the building level by training a local leader for each school. After one year of intensive training, these local leaders, called literacy coordinators, would develop the knowledge and skills needed to support the teachers in their buildings as these teachers took on or refined their literacy instruction. School development was seen as a long-term process requiring several years of effort.

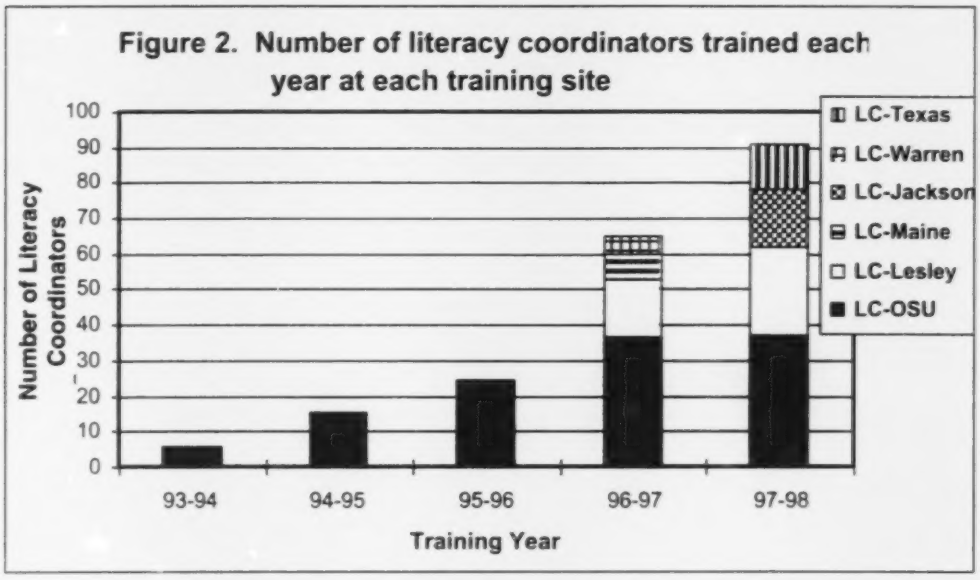
The first group of literacy coordinators was trained at The Ohio State University in 1993 - 1994. Since then the staff of The Early Literacy Learning Initiative at The Ohio State University has trained a new group of literacy coordinators each year. There are now 177 schools representing 77 districts in 20 states (Figures 1, 2, and 3).

University ELLI Training Centers

In order to make literacy coordinator training more accessible, The Ohio State University ELLI staff entered into partnerships with four other universities: Lesley College, Texas Tech University, Georgia State University, and St. Mary's College. Lesley College is in their second year of training literacy coordinators. Texas Tech University began training literacy coordinators this past fall (Fall, 1997) and Georgia State University will begin training literacy coordinators in Fall, 1998. In a few years a training center will open at St. Mary's College in Moraga, California. The four university-based ELLI training sites were selected for two reasons. First, the university trainers at all four sites have a strong commitment to Reading Recovery as a safety net for at-risk first graders. Second, all four institutions are located in different regions of the country, making literacy coordinator training accessible to more schools.

Figure 1. The growth of ELLI from 1993 to 1998





Bilingual Students within ELLI Training Centers/ Sites

Presently, bilingual teachers at 21 sites in six states are supported by bilingual literacy coordinators. These teachers deliver the ELLI instructional framework in Spanish. To assess student progress kindergarten, first, and second grade Spanish-speaking students are administered Spanish versions of the ELLI Fall assessments that are given to English-speaking students. Bilingual Benchmark books are being developed and field-tested for use with other bilingual materials by The Early Literacy Learning Initiative at The Ohio State University. *Aprenda 2* (Harcourt Brace Educational Measurement, 1997), a standardized reading test for Spanish students, is administered in the Fall to second grade Spanish-speaking students.

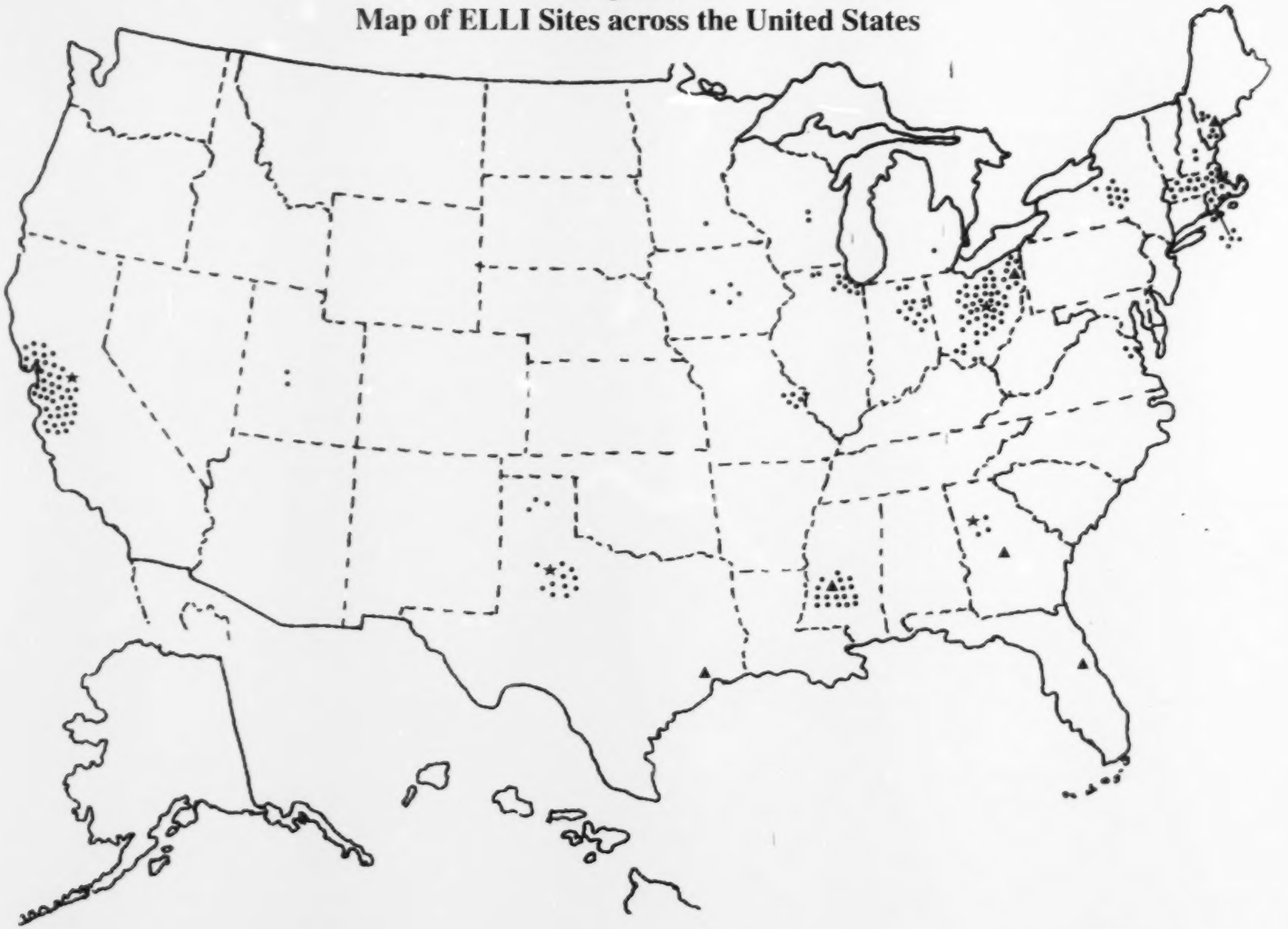
Research/Evaluation Design

The overall goal for the Early Literacy Learning Initiative is to raise the level of literacy achievement of kindergarten, first, and second grade students. The ELLI research design institutes Fall-Fall data collection using a variety of reading and writing assessments, which incorporates both individual and group administrations.

In order to monitor student achievement, both individual and group results are analyzed. The purposes for collecting data on individual children are (1) to help inform instruction by building on each child's strengths and (2) to analyze the growth of individual students over time. The collection of group data provides opportunity to look at the class/group as a whole. School officials then have the opportunity to evaluate curricula and teaching methodology by generalizing group results and/or looking at trends over time (school/grade level).

The goal of data collection in the first year of the project is to establish a baseline for the purpose of historical comparisons. In the Fall of each year, measures are administered to kindergarten, first, and second grade children. The literacy coordinators are the only teachers implementing the framework during their training year. During the next year, classroom teachers are just beginning to use the new approach. Thus, fall testing in the first two years of the project actually form a baseline for subsequent years.

Figure 3.
Map of ELLI Sites across the United States



LEGEND: • **Building Training Sites** ★ **University Training Sites** ▲ **District Training Sites**

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Evaluation is an essential feature of ELLI. Each year data are collected on the literacy achievement of kindergarten, first, and second grade children. The evaluation process serves several purposes:

◊ To establish baseline and measure progress toward goals. When they enter the project, school staffs can use data to establish a baseline against which to assess their school improvement efforts. Developing a school program to its full potential is not a quick or easy process. It is one that may take several years. Systematic examination of children's achievement can serve as a measure and guide for the people involved in the process.

◊ To design/revise the school literacy curriculum. Data are used for problem solving regarding the school program. For example, the literacy coordinator, building administrator, and primary team look at composite results from the assessment. Particularly revealing are the results of second grade assessment, which provides a measure of the impact of the K - 1 program. Team members can detect areas that require more attention and teaching time.

◊ To inform daily instruction of individual students. Most of the measures used in the evaluation design are those that provide meaningful information for teachers because they involve observations of children that inform management of instruction and teaching decisions. Observational procedures are individually administered; the entire process sharpens teachers' awareness of what children know and can do.

◊ To inform administrators and the public. Each year the literacy coordinator and school planning team prepare a report that describes the school program, goals accomplished during the year, and student outcomes. ELLI requires that the reading and writing data be collected from every student in grade kindergarten, one, and two. Many schools collect additional data to inform their instruction and program design.

Instrumentation

Four measures are used to evaluate the Early Literacy Learning Initiative. These measures were chosen since they best matched the goals of the project. All are described below.

1) Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words (HRSIW) (HRSW) (Dictation Task). This task is a measure of the child's knowledge of relationships between letters and sounds in words. The assessor reads a sentence to the child and then reads it again slowly, asking the child to try to write the words. Products are scored as to the number of phonemes accurately represented through sound analysis. Two dictation assessments exist: (1) five sentences to be used in kindergarten and grade 1 (HRSIW) (Maximum score = 37) (Clay, 1993); and (2) one sentence for grade 2 children (HRSW)(Maximum score = 64) (DeFord, Pinnell, Lyons, & Place, 1990).

2) Benchmark Text Reading Assessment. Benchmark texts were constructed to determine students' ability to read, with 90 percent accuracy or better, text(s) at their appropriate grade levels.

3) Fluency. A 4-point likert-type scale to record ratings is used by the teacher to assess each child's ability to read with fluency and phrasing. Fluency and phrasing are characteristics related to comprehension (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996).

4) Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test (3rd Ed., 1989). The Vocabulary and Comprehension subtests of the *Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test* (Level K, Form 1) are administered to all grade 2 students in each building. This test series, which is published by Riverside Publishing, has empirical norms for fall and spring, established in the fall of 1987 and spring of 1988 (MacGinitie & MacGinitie, 1989).

Validity. To ensure that the instruments being used measure what is intended, the validity of the second grade HRSW, Spelling, and Fluency measures was assessed. To assess the validity of these measures, individual scores for the second grade population were correlated with the students' scores on the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test Subscales: Vocabulary, Reading Comprehension, and Total Reading. All correlations were highly significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed) (See Table 1). Since these measures demonstrated a strong correlation with the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Subscales, one can state that the HRSW, Spelling, and Fluency assessments validly measure a child's ability to recognize and understand/comprehend what he/she has read, ranging from single words to passages.

Validity: Does the test measure what it is intended to measure?

Table 1

Pearson Correlations between Fluency, HRSW, Spelling and Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test Subscales for 1996-97 Second Grade Population

	End-of-Year Benchmark Fluency Rating	HRSW Phonemic Awareness	HRSW Spelling	Gates Fall 1996 NCE on Reading Comp	Gates Fall 1996 NCE on Total Reading	Gates Fall 1996 NCE on Vocabulary
End-of-Year Benchmark Fluency Rating	—	.603** (n=5318)	.626** (n=5111)	.691** (n=4399)	.712** (n=4393)	.694** (n=4414)
HRSW Phonemic Awareness		—	.783** (n=6087)	.672** (n=5159)	.718** (n=5151)	.720** (n=5175)
HRSW Spelling			—	.707** (n=4938)	.772** (n=4930)	.788** (n=4948)
Gates Fall 1996 NCE on Reading Comp				—	.953** (n=5392)	.855** (n=5392)
Gates Fall 1996 NCE on Total Reading					—	.956** (n=5392)
Gates Fall 1996 NCE on Vocabulary						—

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Results

Presented in this section are the criteria for the selection of schools for analysis in this report; descriptive information on the selected sites; findings and interpretation of the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test results; and Fall-Spring results of first grade students at two different schools.

Selection of Schools. Schools were selected for inclusion in this report based on the following criteria.

1) The school has been an ELLI school at least four years, thus making it possible to examine results over time.

2) The ELLI training model has been followed and is being implemented.

3) The literacy coordinator has been at the school since the beginning of his/her training; he/she has not taken a leave of absence, transferred, or resigned during this time. It should be noted, however, that the student and/or teacher populations might have changed in the building during this time. For example, at School E during the 1996-97 school year most of the school's student population wa new because of a change in the district's busing policy. At School A, as displayed in Table 2, there has been a substantial increase in the Free and Reduced Price Lunch (FRPL) population since 1992-93 (FRPL: 1992-93, 32.2%).

An example of changes in the teaching populations occurred with the first grade teachers at School A; two of the four first grade teachers were on Maternity Leave for half of the school year during the 1996-97 school year.

Five schools met the above criteria; one from the first training class (1993-94), School A, and the other four from the second training class (1994-95), Schools B – E. Schools A, B, C, and E are urban schools/districts, while School D is a suburban school/district. Table 2 provides Free and Reduced Price Lunch status for each school. The number and percentage of trained teachers in each school by grade level for the 1996-97 school year are presented i Table 3.

Table 2

Free and Reduced Price Lunch Status (FRPL) for Selected ELLI Schools for 1995-96, 1996-97, and 1997-98 School Years

School	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98
School A	58.0%	41.3%	51.4%
School B	98.7%	95.2%%	95.7%
School C	83.9%	84.7%	92.0%
School D	45.0%	47.0%	43.0%
School E	99.3%	98.7%	99.6%

Table 3

Number and Percentage of Teachers Who Have Completed Initial ELLI Training at Each Site for 1996-97 by Grade Level

School	Kindergarten		First Grade		Second Grade		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
School A	2	100%	4[a]	100%	3	100%	9	100%
School B	2	100%	2	100%	2	50.0%	6	83.3%
School C	1	100%	3	66.7%	2	50.0%	6	66.7%
School D	4	100%	5	60.0%	5	0.0%	14	50.0%
School E	3	66.7%	4	100%	2	50.0%	9	77.8%

[a] Two of the four teachers were on maternity leave during the 1996-97 school year.

Standardized Test Results. Standardized test results on the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test, NCEs[1], for three different cohorts of second grade students during the 1995-96 through 1997-98 school years are presented for the five schools, Table 4, p.10. These standardized test results for the second grade students in the Fall of 1995, Fall 1996, and the Fall of 1997 on Reading Comprehension and Total Reading are also displayed by school in Figures 4 and 5.

The second grade cohorts in four of five of the schools (80%) demonstrated NCE gains across the three years on the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test in Total Reading and Reading Comprehension from the Fall of 1995, 1996, and 1997. The schools in which the ELLI model has been fully implemented demonstrated an average NCE gain of 5.60 NCEs in Reading Comprehension and 5.31 NCEs in Total Reading.

Standardized test results at School E were examined further due to the change in the student population at the beginning of the 1996-97 school year. The group of students who were new to the school in 1996-97 was examined in relation to two groups of students. These two groups of students were in classrooms of teachers who were ELLI trained: one group of students attended school at least 141 days out of 178 school days (79%)[2], while the other group attended less than 141 days. Results for the three groups of students are presented in Table 5. Results should be interpreted with caution due to the small number of students in each group.

The second grade students who were in first grade classrooms taught by ELLI- trained teachers and attended school at least 140 days scored higher than those children who were in ELLI classrooms but attended school less than 141 days. In turn the students who attended school less than 141 days outperformed the group of students who were new to the school.

[1] An NCE, Normal Curve Equivalent, is a statistical transformation of percentile ranks in which reading achievement is divided into 99 equal units with a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 21.06. NCEs are generally considered to provide the truest indication of student growth in achievement since they provide comparative information in equal units of measurement. It should be kept in mind that NCEs are based on percentiles, which compare the student's performance in relation to the general population. An NCE of 50 represents where a student should be for his/her grade level. For a student's NCE score to remain the same at posttest as at pretest does not denote a lack of absolute progress; on the contrary, it means that the student has maintained the same relative position in terms of the general population. Even a small gain in NCEs indicates advancement from the student's original level of achievement.

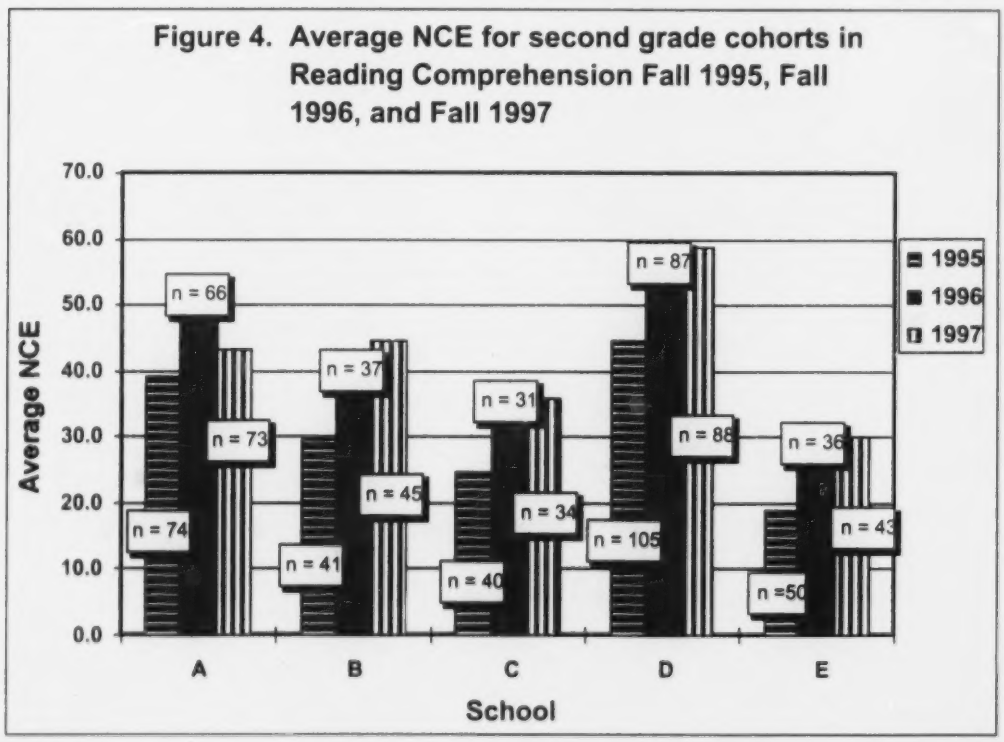
[2] The attendance criterion was based upon a natural break in the attendance distribution for all students in ELLI schools during the 1996-97 school year.

Table 4

Standardized Test Results on Gates-MacGinitie Reading Subtests for Second Grade Cohorts by School by Year[a]

School	Fall 1995			Fall 1996			Fall 1997		
		Reading Comp	Total Reading		Reading Comp	Total Reading		Reading Comp	Total Reading
	n	NCE	NCE	n	NCE	NCE	n	NCE	NCE
School A	74	38.7	38.3	66	47.2	46.6	73	42.8	40.6
School B	41	29.6	29.2	37	35.9	35.1	45	44.7	41.5
School C	40	24.7	24.6	31	31.3	27.9	34	35.8	33.1
School D	105	44.6	42.5	87	52.1	50.1	88	58.9	61.8
School E	50	18.6	17.2	36	24.9	23.2	43	30.0	27.9

[a] Fall 1995 was the first year that a standardized test was administered for evaluation purposes within the ELLI project. Consequently, only one year of baseline data is available for Schools B – E in this report; two years of baseline data will be available for future reports. No baseline data are available for School A.



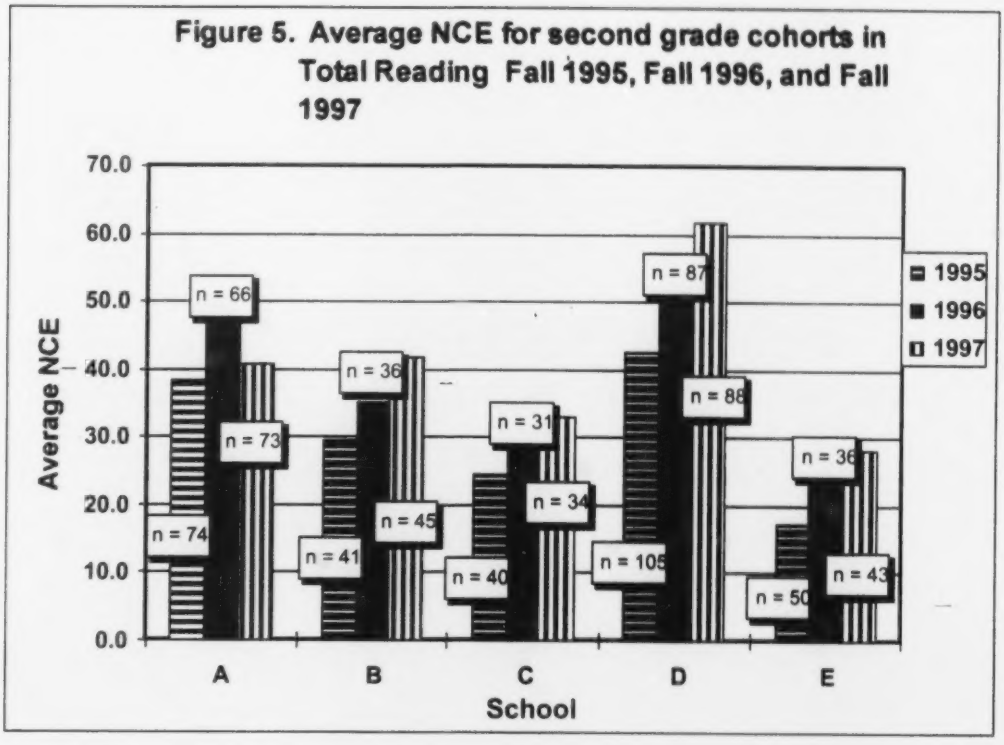
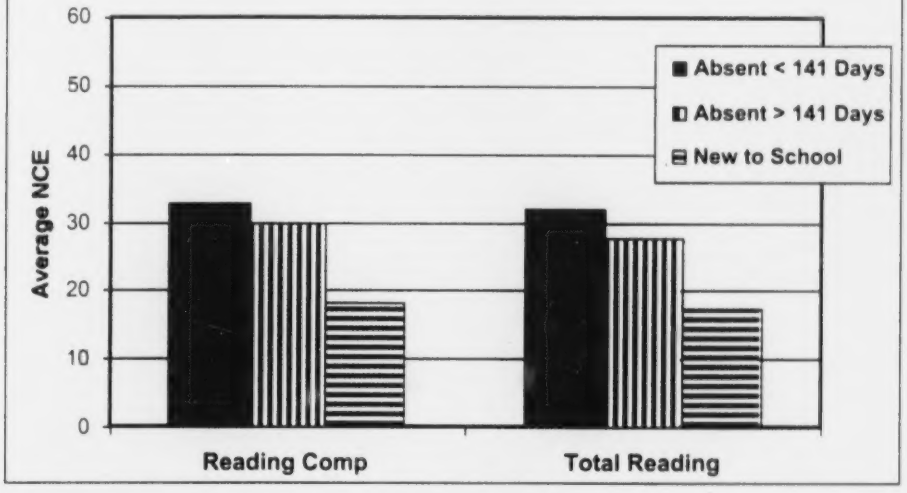


Table 5

Average NCE Scores on Reading Comprehension and Total Reading on the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test for Second Grade Students by Attendance Groups for Fall 1996 at School E

Sample	Fall 1996			
	Reading Comprehension		Total Reading	
	n	NCE	n	NCE
• Students in ELLI classrooms who attended school more than 140 days	9	32.8	9	32.0
• Students in ELLI classrooms who attended school 140 days or less	8	29.5	8	27.6
• Students new to school	11	18.1	11	17.1

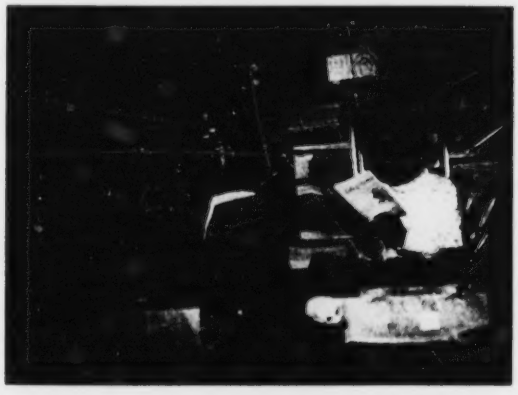
Figure 6. Average NCE in Reading Comprehension and Total Reading for second grade students at School E Fall 1996



Individual Schools with Fall-Spring Data. ELLI requires the collection of Fall-Fall data. Of the five schools in this report, two collected additional Fall-Spring data to measure student achievement on all first grade children during the 1996-97 school year. The two schools were Schools B and C. Assessments administered by both of these schools to examine their school program included Text Reading Level (TRL)[3] and HRSIW. Both of these assessments are part of the Observation Survey (Clay, 1993). Results are presented below.

School B is an urban school serving approximately 310 students. This school is a Title 1 Schoolwide building. Seven special education classes, 22% of the school population, are housed at School B. In addition to being an ELLI school with Reading Recovery support, over 100 community members come to the school each week to tutor students one-on-one in reading and writing.

Figures 7 and 8 display the stanine[4] frequency distributions of Text Reading Level and HRSIW scores for first grade students at School B in the Fall and Spring of the 1996-97 school year. For stanines, as with NCEs, when a child remains at the same stanine level from pretest to posttest means that the child has maintained the same relative position in terms of the general population. Even a small gain denotes growth beyond what would be expected for that time period and grade level.



[3] Measures of Text Reading Level were obtained by constructing a gradient of difficulty for text drawn originally from a basal reading system. A child's text reading level indicates the highest level of text that he/she reads at 90% accuracy or above.

[4] Stanines are standardized scores in which the range of reading achievement is divided into 9 equal units with a mean of 5 and a standard deviation of 2. Stanines of 1, 2, and 3 are below average; 4, 5, and 6 are average; and 7, 8, and 9 are above average.

Figure 7. Number of first grade children achieving Text Reading Level stanines at School B Fall - Spring 1996 - 1997

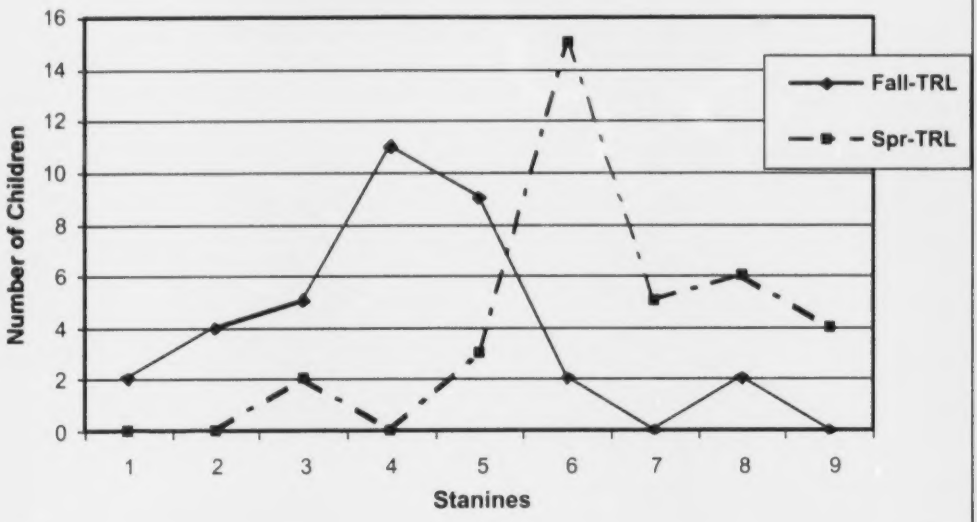
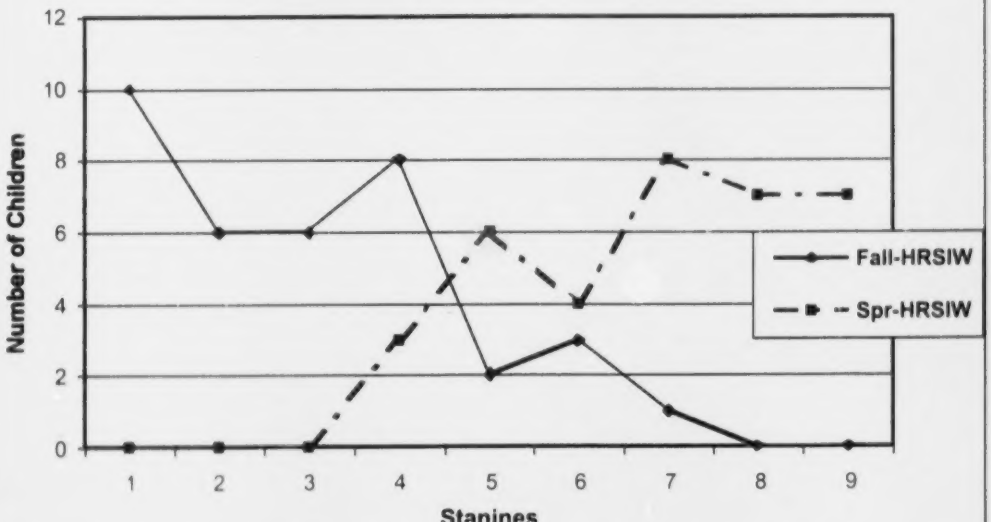


Figure 8. Number of first grade children achieving HRSIW stanines at School B Fall - Spring 1996 - 1997



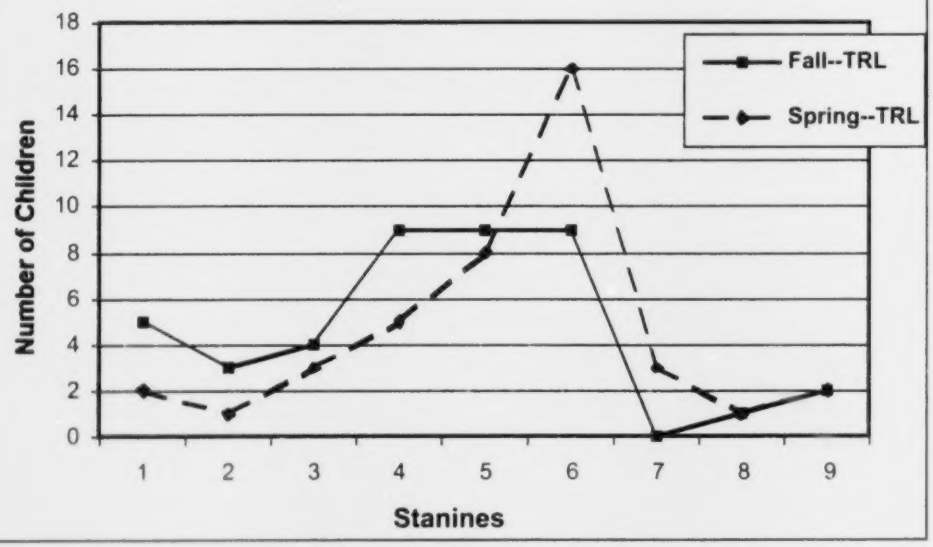
In Fall 1996 most of the first grade students in School B, Figure 7, read at a level that was expected for first grade, while in Spring 1997 most of these children were reading at a higher level than was expected for first grade students. A similar, yet stronger pattern is seen for the HRSIW results, Figure 8. This is a remarkable achievement for any student, especially for this population.

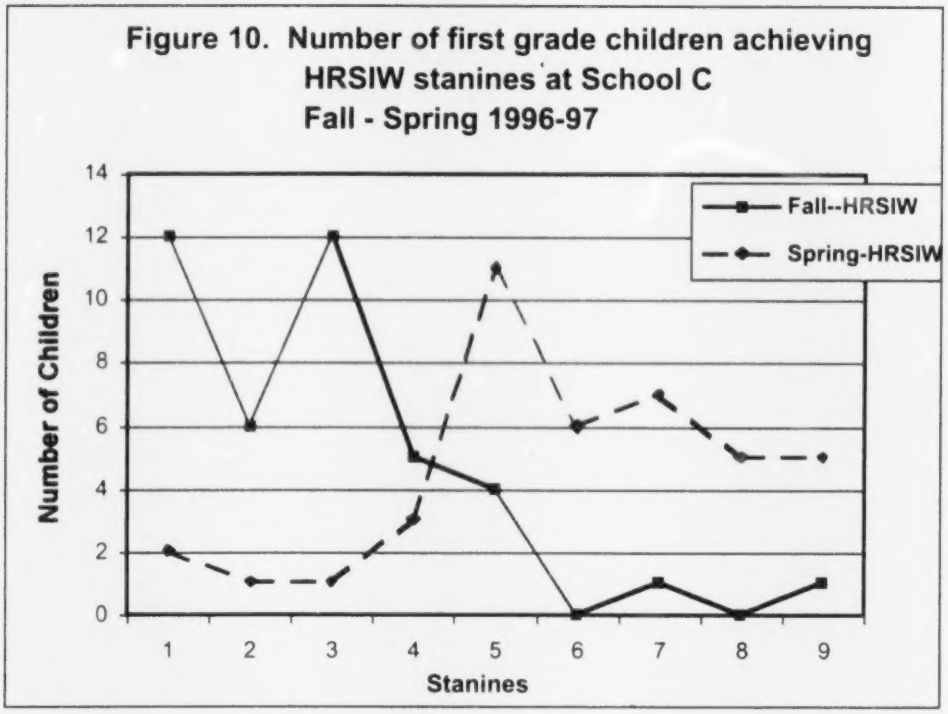
School C is located in a small Midwestern city. The school serves about 150 children. Large proportions of the students come from families who live at or below the poverty line. Like many schools that serve impoverished families, there is a high student mobility rate. Not all of the teachers in this building have participated in the ELLI training.

Frequency stanine distributions for first grade students' results at School C on TRL and HRSIW are similar to School B, although a little less dramatic, but nonetheless growth exceeds that which would be expected for first grade students (see Figures 9 and 10).

First grade students at both schools B and C produced the most noticeable stanine shifts in writing, as demonstrated on the HRSIW assessment, with a lesser shift in reading, as measured by the TRL assessment.

Figure 9. Number of first grade children achieving Text Reading Level stanines at School C Fall - Spring 1996-97





Responses of Educators to the ELLI School Development Program

As part of this report literacy coordinators, administrators, and teachers in the five ELLI schools were interviewed. A summary of the comments follows.

Literacy Coordinators. The literacy coordinators from the five buildings whose data are reported in this document were interviewed regarding the implementation of ELLI at their schools. Analysis of their responses provides evidence of some common patterns across schools.

◊ **Teacher Talk.** The literacy coordinators noticed changes in teacher talk. They all agreed that the teachers in their buildings now have a common language. They discuss children's reading behaviors in terms of strategies and sources of information that children are using or need to learn to use. One literacy coordinator summed it up by saying, "We have changed the way we talk. We talk in terms of the strategies that children are developing (Literacy Coordinator, School E)."

◊ **Collegial Support.** One of the outcomes of the changing nature of conversations among teaching staff is the development of collegial support. Teachers in these ELLI buildings know that they can find support from other staff members in working with challenging students. One literacy coordinator said, "Very rarely would I go to a teacher when I was having trouble with a child. Now I can go to a wealth of resources—the teachers in the building—and say 'Help me.' We have developed a framework for helping each other problem-solve."

◊ **Observant Teachers.** One literacy coordinator commented that teachers have a better understanding of the learning process. Another agreed and said that teachers in her building "look at children more on a continuum from emergent to independent." Another literacy coordinator added to the conversation by saying that at her school "they look at what children can do, not what they can't."

Principals. All five principals from the buildings highlighted in this report were also interviewed. When they were asked about the impact ELLI has had on their buildings, their responses touched a variety of topics.

◊ **Collegial Support.** Several principals talked about the increased collegiality among staff members. One principal (Principal, School E) said that he has noticed a general increase in collaboration and teamwork since the school has had a literacy coordinator. He attributed this change to the leadership role of the literacy coordinator. Another principal stated that she has seen stronger collegial relationships within grade levels as a result of teachers participating in ELLI training. Yet another spoke of the literacy-specific training for classroom teachers on-site when asked about strengths of the program:

> "Personally I like the availability of literacy-specific training for **classroom teachers** on-site. Having a literacy coordinator working with classroom teachers has improved literacy teaching which, in turn, has led to increased learning among students (Principal, School D)."

◊ **Role of Literacy Coordinator.** The building principals valued the work being done by the literacy coordinator. One principal said that the staff in his building has become more reflective practitioners. He stated that the literacy coordinator has helped teachers to think more about how children learn. This, in turn, has caused them to change teaching practices. He said that they have a much better idea of what each child needs to learn in order to become a better reader (Principal, School E). Another principal noted that "ELLI training enriches the staff and therefore enriches the literacy learning of children (Principal, School D)."

The principal at School A stated that the success of the program is linked directly to the support and supervision of the literacy coordinator.

> "The ELLI program was implemented four years ago at (School A) with the training of our ELLI coordinator and the establishment of our partnership with the Ohio State University. Subsequent years brought ELLI training for all staff, kindergarten through second grades, to use as the delivery system for teaching reading and written language. The overall success of this program can be directly attributed to the consistent support and supervision from our ELLI coordinator, (LC, School A). She maintains contact with classroom teachers and provides technical expertise, encouragement, and program supervision. I cannot stress enough the importance of the ELLI coordinator position in the success of this program. The simple training of teachers and casting them off to teach with newly learned skills is not enough to realize the maximum benefits of this well designed and proven program (Principal, School A)."

Several principals mentioned the importance of site-based leadership. One said that having the support at the building level makes learning easily accessible to everyone (Principal, School B).

◊ **Taking on New Instructional Practices**. Not all teachers are eager to try out new instructional approaches. Some literacy coordinators deliberately trained the most enthusiastic teachers first, hoping that their enthusiasm will spread to more reluctant teachers.

A principal from one building said,

> "Initially some teachers in our building were reluctant to try out new ways of teaching. But they did notice the children's work displayed by the teachers participating in the initial ELLI training. The following year they had students in their classrooms that loved to read and write. These more reluctant teachers are now beginning to change some of their instructional practices—without my insistence (Principal, School B)."

The principal at School D supported this same view:

> "Some principals mandate that teachers try out new approaches for teaching. I think that when they come to it themselves, they own it. We can force it on people, but it makes for an unhappy staff and may not lead to the results you expect. This will not create long-term change. Change takes time.
>
> In my building, some teachers were reluctant in the beginning, but as they saw the results and value in it, they have begun to incorporate these new instructional practices (Principal, School D)."

◊ **Teaching and Learning.** Principals also observed that the climate for teaching and learning has changed since the school became an ELLI school.

> "Of course the impact on student achievement is impressive. But what really impressed me was the first time a child came to read to me. I am from the old school. If a child stops, you tell him the word. When this child got stuck, he knew just what to do. He cross-checked and self-corrected his own reading. These young readers are being taught how to help themselves—how to use strategies. It is wonderful to see such independence at such an early age (Principal, School B)."

In addition to the principals of the five schools studied here, principals from two buildings that trained literacy coordinators last year already noticed changes in their buildings. Kim Marshall, principal at Mather School in Boston, stated that he has never seen a program that teachers have taken to so readily. He said that ELLI is off to a strong start in kindergarten, first, and second grades.

Parkway Elementary School is in the first year of ELLI implementation. A literacy coordinator was trained in 1996 - 1997 and is now working with teachers in their initial training. Even before this first full year of implementation Ellen Desoriers, principal, noticed that teachers were informally sharing ideas and that literacy teaching and learning was increasing in the school. She continues to be impressed by the changes she has noticed in her building saying:

> "I've never before been in a situation in which teachers know so much about teaching the skills of reading and writing. Without a doubt there is more reading and writing going on in our school."

She remarked that even kindergarten children understand critical concepts related to literacy—that reading and writing are useful tools to convey messages. The daily schedule at this school includes three to four hours of English language arts instruction. Social studies and science are incorporated into this block. An additional hour is spent on mathematics instruction.

Summary and Recommendations

A summary and discussion of the results, and recommendations for implementation and future research are presented in this section.

Summary and Discussion

The Early Literacy Learning Initiative is a comprehensive approach designed to provide long-term support to schools working toward successful literacy achievement for every child by the end of second grade.

A strength as well as a weakness in the research conducted in ELLI schools is that this is not an experimental or controlled study; the data are from kindergarten, first, and second grade classrooms where many "things" are going on each day. These events do not always relate positively to teaching and learning, but they are part of the process. For example, many children move from one school to another during a school year; consequently, many schools have high mobility rates. In addition, there are daily disruptions to teaching schedules, substitute teacher shortages, changes in the teaching staff, etc. Nonetheless, the preliminary results from schools where the ELLI training model has been fully implemented look very promising.

Preliminary results from schools in which the ELLI training model has been fully implemented for four or more years reveals that the majority (80%) of these schools is demonstrating a consistent pattern of improved standardized test results (NCEs) in reading from the Fall of 1995 to the Fall of 1997. More specifically, the average NCE gain on the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test in Reading Comprehension across schools over the three years was 5.60 NCEs and 5.31 NCEs in Total Reading.

Standardized test results from one of the schools in which there was a change in the school population from the 1995-96 to the 1996-97 school year were analyzed further to find out if the NCE gain was due to ELLI or to new students moving in to the school. Analyses revealed that the students who had ELLI trained teachers in first grade and had attended school at least 141 days (79%) scored higher on both Reading Comprehension and Total Reading than students who had ELLI trained teachers in first grade but had attended school less than 141 days. Both of these groups of students, in turn, outperformed the students who were new to the school. Consequently, it can be said that the NCE scores from the second grade students who were new to this school in 1996-97 did not outperform the students who had been at this school in first grade classrooms of ELLI trained teachers in Reading Comprehension and Total Reading. Nonetheless, these results should be interpreted with caution due to the small sample size of each group.

Unfortunately, it is not clear why the NCE scores for one of the schools decreased from Fall 199 to Fall 1997. Preliminary review of the data revealed several possible explanations: 1) the Fall 1996 cohort of second grade students was an exceptional group, i.e., there is a larger number of high- ability students in this class compared to other cohorts of students at this school; 2) two of the four ELLI trained first grade teachers were on maternity leave during 1995-96; and 3) ELLI training was revised from 1993-94 training to the 1994-95 training, the effects of which are unclear since the other sites trained during 1993-94 did not follow the ELLI training model. Furthermore, since 1995 was the first year that the standardized test was administered, no baseline data are available for School A. Until additional analyses are performed, no explanations can be given.

Two schools collected additional Fall-Spring data on first grade students during the 1996-97 school year. Both schools had Text Reading Level (TRL) and Hearing and Recording Sounds In Words (HRSIW) data on all first grade students. Fall and Spring stanine results revealed similar trends for th two schools. Each group of students showed a positive shift in the stanine distribution from Fall to Spring, with the greatest shift demonstrated by HRSIW results.

Interview data from literacy coordinators, principals, and teachers at the five schools revealed numerous changes as a result of the implementation of ELLI. Several of these changes include increased collegial support, change in the teacher talk, improved literacy teaching, and increased learning and enthusiasm for reading and writing among students. Overall the implementation of ELLI has reformed literacy education in these schools.

Recommendations

For Implementation. Based on the findings, the following recommendations for implementation are in order.

1. Full implementation of the ELLI training model appears to be necessary to achieve good results. Analyses of data from schools not following the ELLI model (and not included in this report) are showing inconsistencies in Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test results across years. It is recommended that each literacy coordinator be assigned to only one school.

2. Research has shown that the amount of time students spend engaged in reading, i.e., engaged time, effects student achievement (Burstein, 1980; Fisher, Filby, Marliave, Cahen, Dishaw, Moore, & Berliner, 1978; Slavin, Karweit, & Madden, 1989). Even though teachers are trained how to help children become more strategic readers and writers, teachers need to be sure that children are engaged in reading and writing instruction for significant amounts of time each day in order to achieve optimum results. Children will not become proficient readers and writers as quickly unless they read and write and receive instruction in reading and writing every day.

3. Efforts with schools to improve home school communication should be continued so parents will realize the importance of children attending school daily. In addition, efforts to help reduce mobility rates, such as working with social service agencies or providing transportation so children can stay at the same school all year, need to be explored to help individual children.

4. Based on comments from principals and literacy coordinators, it appears that literacy coordinators need administrative support in order to provide the desired change. In order for ELLI to be effective, a literacy coordinator needs to be able to fulfill the responsibilities of a literacy coordinator and not be used for other functions in the school, i.e., be assistant principal, substitute teacher, or pulled away for other administrative tasks. We would not expect children to make the same gains in reading and writing if the classroom teacher were absent most of the time; likewise, we cannot expect teachers to make changes in their teaching practices if the literacy coordinator who supports their learning is assigned to do other duties.

For Further Research. Based on the findings presented, the following research studies are being proposed:

1. The Early Literacy Learning Initiative at The Ohio State University is pilot-testing a district-level training centers model and has entered into collaborative agreements for training literacy coordinators with several school districts. Each district has a district-level trainer of literacy coordinators trained at OSU. Training a district level person requires a minimum of two years of training. After the district trainer has completed training, she/he is responsible for training building level literacy coordinators. Data from the pilot sites will be evaluated to determine the effectiveness of the district-level training model.

2. It makes intuitive sense that children in full-day kindergarten programs may leave kindergarten knowing more about reading and writing than children in half-day kindergarten programs; thus, first grade teachers are able to begin instruction at a higher level. Some ELLI schools provide full-day kindergarten, while others have half-day kindergarten. Consequently, a study needs to be conducted to look at the effects of children in full day versus half-day kindergarten programs.

3. Presently, all literacy coordinators are able to refine their training by attending yearly institutes and receiving on-site visits from university trainers. More intensive models of support are being explored. For example, some previously trained literacy coordinators have been invited to attend a monthly study group at which time they discuss how to be more effective in their role as literacy coordinator. Further investigations are being conducted to determine if this approach really does help improve their professional development/training.

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Literacy Coordinator Training Session

University Training Sites

Lesley College, Cambridge, MA
The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH
Texas Tech University, Lubbock, TX

the early literacy
ELLI
learning initiative
at The Ohio State University